A

SERMON,

Preach'd at

EXON,

MAY 10th, 1710.

Before An

ASSEMBLY

OF THE

UNITED MINISTERS

OF

DEVON and *CORNWALL.*

Publish'd at the Request of many of the Auditory.

By *THO. EDGLEY.*

JER. 3. 15. *And I will give you* Pastours *according to mine Heart, which shall feed you with Knowledge and Understanding.*

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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SERMON,

Preach'd before an Aſſembly of the United Miniſters.

JEREMIAH, Chap. III. Ver. xv.

And I will give you Paſtours *according to mine Heart, which ſhall feed you with Knowledge and Underſtanding.*

THE *Church* may be conſider'd under Two Remarkable Diſpenſations, That of *Moſes*, and *Chriſt*. Under the firſt, ſhe had more of *Pomp* and *Ceremony:* Under the laſt, ſhe hath more of *Life* and *Spirit*. Under the firſt, ſhe was in a great meaſure confin'd to the *Common-Wealth* of *Iſrael:* Under the laſt, her *Empire* is enlarg'd; *Chriſt* broke down the *Moſaick* Encloſure, and invited the more Barbarous Nations to the Priviledges of his *Grace*. The *River of Life*, which water'd the Land of *Paleſtine*, hath overflow'd her Banks, and, with her fertile Streams, turn'd the *Deſert* of the *Gentiles* into the *Garden* of the *Lord*.

I ſhall conſider my Text as a Prophecy, which relates to *this* Age of the *Church*, under the Adminiſtration of *Chriſt*; and for this, I have not only the united Vote of the moſt celebrated *Expoſitors*, but, I think, the Authority of the *Prophet* himſelf, in the following Verſe: ——*In thoſe Days, ſaith the Lord, they ſhall ſay no more, The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord: Neither ſhall it come*

to mind, neither ſhall they remember it, neither ſhall they viſit it, neither ſhall this be done any more.

IN the Words Two Parts are Obſervable:

I. A gracious Promiſe: *I will give you* Paſtours *according to mine Heart.*

THE word *Paſtour*, which heretofore ſignify'd any kind of *Ruler*, is under the *Goſpel* appropriated to *Eccleſiaſtical Officers*, to whoſe Inſtruction and Over-ſight the *Church* is committed, as a *Flock* to the Care of a *Shepherd*. The *Officer*, therefore, here deſign'd by *Paſtour*, is a *Miniſter of the Goſpel*; and the *Qualifications* neceſſary to diſcharge his *Office*, are wrapt up in theſe Expreſſions, *according to mine Heart.*

II. THE *Paſtours* Work and Duty: *Which ſhall feed you with Knowledge and Underſtanding*; *i. e.* with the *ſound Doctrines* and *Precepts* of the *Goſpel*, which are ſufficient to make you Wiſe to Salvation.

ALL the Parts of the Miniſterial Office are included in this Clauſe; one eminent Branch, by a uſual Figure, being put for the whole.

THE Subſtance of *both* is this: The *State* of the *Church* is now very *corrupt*; the moſt Venerable *Rights of Religion* are *prophan'd*; its *Divine Doctrines debas'd* by a mixture of *Tradition*; and the Force of its *Eternal Precepts enervated*, by the *Blindneſs* and *Wickedneſs* of its *Prieſts* and *Prophets*. But the Days of the *Meſſiah* are at hand, when I will give you *Paſtours*, furniſh'd with *Wiſdom* and *Integrity*, to *feed* and *rule* you: *Paſtours*, whom I will bleſs with ſuch Succeſs, that they ſhall raiſe the *Church* to a greater *Glory* and *Purity*, than that from which ſhe is now fallen.

THE

THE *PROPOSITION* which offers it ſelf from the Words is this:

> *THAT the* Commiſſion *and* Qualifications *of* Miniſters, *by which they are Authoriz'd and Enabled to diſcharge all the Parts of their* Office, *are from GOD.*

IN diſcourſing of which, I ſhall purſue the following Method:

Firſt, I ſhall enquire into the *Qualifications* of *Miniſters.*

Secondly, DISCOURSE ſome of the *Principal Branches* of their *Office.*

Thirdly, PROVE the *Propoſition.* And then *Apply* it.

Firſt, I am to enquire into the *Qualifications* of *Miniſters*; and I ſhall take Notice only of theſe two, *Eminency in Knowledge*, and *Holineſs.*

(1.) *Eminency in Knowledge.*

THE *Underſtandings* of *Miniſters* muſt be advanc'd above the *common Level*, to ſecure their *Perſons* and *Office* from Contempt. The People will not be eaſily perſwaded to pay 'em the *Honours* due to the Characters of *Embaſſadors*, unleſs they underſtand the Nature of their *Embaſſy*, and are well acquainted with the *Laws* and *Intereſt* of their *Sovereign.* What a prodigious Stock of *Knowledge* is neceſſary for that Order of Men, who are to *explain* the *Sublime Doctrines* of *Chriſtianity*, and *ſpeak* of GOD, and an *Eternal World*, in the Language of *Mortals!* Who are to *trace out* the *ſecret Paths* of the *Prince of Darkneſs*, and *meet* the *Infernal Serpent* at every winding! Who are to *treat* with Souls *blinded* by *Senſuality*, and

and *govern'd* by *deceitful Luſts*, about the Great Affairs of *Life* and *Death!* Tell me, Sirs, if you can, what Furniture is neceſſary for that Man's Head, who is to *counterplot* the *Policy* of *Devils*, and *ſilence* the *Oppoſition* of *Rebellious Nature* to *Holineſs?* Who is to *reſolve* the moſt *perplex'd Caſes of Conſcience*, and *maintain* the *Articles* of our *Holy Religion* againſt all *Gainſayers?* Such Conſiderations ſhould perſwade all, who already are, or deſign to be, engag'd in this Work, to ſtudy the *Scriptures* with *indefatigable Induſtry*; and *compare* the *Tranſlations* with the *Original Languages*, that they may not Interpret by Gueſs, or be Impos'd on by corrupt Gloſſes: To furniſh themſelves with a good Stock of Rational Learning, that they may be able to call in Humane Arts and Sciences to their Aſſiſtance. The Gold of *Ophir* ſhines bright in the *Temple*, and the Spoils of *Egypt* have their Uſe when devoted to the Service of the *Sanctuary*.

St. *Paul*, tho' immediately Inſpired, quotes divers Sentences out of *Heathen Authors*, to wound the *vain Pretenders* to *Learning*, with Arrows drawn from their own Quiver. We find him alſo adviſing *Timothy*, To give himſelf to *Reading*, to *Exhortation*, and *Doctrine*, that his *Profiting might appear unto all*. Methinks, after ſuch a Charge as this from an *Apoſtle*, *unſtudied Mechanicks*, and *wild Enthuſiaſts*, ſhould tremble to uſurp the ſacred Character. *Ignorance* and *Impudence*, cemented by *Conceit*, furniſh out the moſt *Ridiculous Creature* in the World. Such as ſtep from the *Plow* or the *Compter* to the *Pulpit*, are like to make a *ſcandalous Figure* there. To ſee the *Bats* fly about in the Twilight, is no Wonder: But to find ſuch *Amphibious Creatures* appear in the Face of the Sun, is very ſurprizing! Are theſe, Oh! *Iſrael*, the *Chariots* and *Horſe-men* who muſt defend thy *Walls*? Are theſe the *Engineers* thou haſt choſen, to undermine the *Kingdom of Satan*, and demoliſh the *Strong-Holds of Sin?* Oh! tell it not in *Gath*, publiſh it not in *Aſkelon*, leſt the *Uncir-*

1 *Tim.* 4. 13, 15.

cumcis'd

cumcis'd attack thee with a superiour Force, and triumph on thy Ruins.

(2.) *Eminency in Holiness.*

BY *Holiness* here, I mean a *steady Conformity* to the *Divine Nature* and *Law*. *Aaron* and his Sons were wash'd in a Brasen Laver, and anointed with perfum'd Oil, to represent the *Necessity* of *Personal Sanctification*, to qualify those who serve at the *Altars* of an *Holy GOD*, *Exod.* 20. 19, 20, 25, 30. *CHRIST*, the *Great Bishop* of the *Church*, and *Grand Exemplar* of all *Subordinate Pastours*, possess'd the *Spirit of Holiness* without measure. *Ministers* should have a peculiar *Sense* of the *Moment* of *Religion* upon their own Souls, that they may *inspire* others with the same Passions they feel in themselves. *John* 3. 34.

'TIS a melancholy Work, to study the *Doctrines of Life* under the *Power* of *Spiritual Death*; and preach the *Liberties* of the *Sons of GOD*, in the *heavy Chains* of *Guilt* and *Wrath*. A *Minister*'s *Heart* is the best or worst Part of him; if that be not ennobled with the *Divine Image*, all his other Accomplishments do but fit him to be a more Successful Slave to *Satan*, and Enemy to the Souls of Men. 'Tis not *composing* a *Sermon* with the greatest *Exactness*, or *delivering* it in the *Language* and *Gesture* of an *Orator*, that makes a profitable Preacher. Were all the *Fountains* of *Reason* and *Perswasion* open to your view, were you *Masters* of all the *Art* and *Eloquence* in the World; yet, without *renewed Hearts* and *refined Lives*, 'tis not likely you should accomplish the Great Ends of your *Ministry*; the Illustration of *Jehovah*'s Perfections in the Salvation of Souls. *GOD* ordinarily works by agreeable Means, transforming the *Hearts* and *Lives* of *Sinners* by the *Labours* of *devout* and *heavenly Ministers*.

BUT supposing *Success* should sometimes attend his *lively Oracles* deliver'd by *unholy Ministers*, this *Success* would

would be of no more Advantage to 'em, than the building of the *Ark* was to those *Artificers*, who were immediately swept away with the Deluge. All the *Graces* of the *Spirit* are necessary to make a *private Christian*, but 'tis fit they should shine in *Ministers* with a greater Lustre. The *Duties* and *Difficulties* of their *Office*, demand the *vital Presence* of some *Graces* in a *peculiar manner*.

1. *FAITH*, to realise a distant World. He who is not *govern'd* himself by the *Hopes* and *Fears* of an *Eternal State*, will never heartily pity *dying Souls*, or affectionately promote their *endless Happiness*. He who is not so firmly perswaded of the *Life to come*, as to grow *dead* to all the *Vanities* of *this*, as to give GOD and Things Divine the Preference in his Choice and Pursuit, can hardly be supposed in earnest in seeking the *Salvation* of others.

2. *WISDOM*. 'Twas your *Lord* himself who said, *Be Wise as Serpents, and Harmless as Doves*, Mat. 10. 16. *Ministers* had need be Men of *Prudence* and *Discretion*, that their Conduct towards *Friends* and *Enemies* may be *decent* and *obliging*. You have a great Variety of *Tempers* to deal with, and must accommodate your selves to 'em all for Edification; Persons of all Ages are under your Care, and suitable Provision must be made for them.

Wisdom, Sirs, is necessary for you, whose *Office* it is *rightly* to *divide* the *Word*, and give to every one his *portion*; to awaken secure Sinners, and bind up wounded Consciences; to uncase soul-deluding Hypocrites, and encourage trembling Converts; to parcel-out Reproofs and Cordials, that neither of them may be misplac'd or lost.

3. *FAITHFULNESS*. Christ commits the Mysteries of *Salvation* to the Custody of his Ministers, and expects they should be *Faithful Stewards* of such an *Invaluable*

luable Treasure. Let a Man so account of us, as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful, 1 Cor. 4. 1, 2. If we conceal any *necessary Truths* from *politick Considerations*, or prostitute the *sacred Rights* of *Christianity* to a *Worldly Interest*; If we sharply censure the *Infirmities of the Poor*, and connive at the daring Vices of the *Great*; If we are over-awed by the *Frowns*, or brib'd in our *Administrations*, by the *Favours* of the *Rich*; we betray the *Trust* which *Christ* hath repos'd in us. 'Tis as lawful for us to consult our *Ease* and *Interest*, as Persons of another Character; but wo be to us, if we purchase them at the Expence of the *Blood of Christ*, and our *own Consciences. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by Partiality,* 1 Tim. 5. 21.

4. *HUMILITY.* There's no Vice Ministers are more strongly tempted to, and yet none's more inconsistent with their Character, than *Pride.* Are not all our *Accomplishments* the *Gifts* of *Divine Bounty?* And does not all our *Success* depend upon a *Divine Blessing?* What is there in a *Blast* of *Popular Air*, should transport us with a vain Conceit of our own Worth? Is the *Opinion* of an *unthinking Crowd*, who neither know our *Heads* or *Hearts*, worth the minding, when we are every Day hastening to the Bar of an *Omniscient Judge?* St. *Paul*, tho' Honour'd with the *highest Gifts* and *Graces*, retained a Humble Sense of his own *Vileness*; He tells us, *That he was the least of the Apostles, not meet to be called an Apostle, yea, less than the least of all Saints.* And shall we then, who come so short of him in all *Ministerial Abilities*, dare indulge a *Lofty Thought:* A stricter Acquaintance with our own Hearts would shame us out of our *Pride*, and lay us level with the Dust.

1 *Cor.* 4. 7. ------ 3. 6. 1 *Cor.* 15. 9. *Eph.* 3. 8.

HOW much *Ignorance*, *Unbelief*, and *Earthly-mindedneſs*, is there yet remaining in the beſt of us! And are ſuch Wretches meet to be the *Embaſſadors* of *GOD* to the *World*? Meet to enlighten *benighted Minds*, and preach *ungodly Sinners* into a *Love of Holineſs*? And if we are conſcious of our own *Inability*, to diſcharge the peculiar Duties of our *own Office*, we have little Reaſon to have a high Eſteem of our *own Deſerts*. A *humble Senſe* of our *own Imperfections*, is neceſſary to keep us dependent on CHRIST, for a richer Furniture of Miniſterial Abilities; And a *lowly Carriage* towards our *Flock*, is as neceſſary to eſtabliſh our Intereſt in their Affections, without which our *Labours* muſt be *uſeleſs*.

5. *PATIENCE*. *Miniſters* muſt expect to meet with a great many *Reproaches* from an Ill-natur'd World. 'Tis not the *Dignity* of your *Office* will ſcreen you from the *Inſults* of the profeſs'd Enemies of *Religion*. 'Tis not your *Fidelity* and *Zeal* will ſecure you from the *Cavils* of ſome peeviſh Chriſtians. If therefore you are not fortify'd with *Patience*, you'll faint in your Work, when your *Perſons* and *Miniſtry* are deſpiſed.

6. *FORTITUDE*. St. *Paul*, in the Face of *Death*, charg'd the *Blood* of the *LORD of Glory* upon that very *Sanhedrim* which Condemn'd him. This *Bravery* and *Reſolution* commands your *Imitation*: If you'll approve your ſelves the *Servants* of CHRIST, you muſt not dread the Faces of the *proudeſt Worms* on Earth; but tell them roundly, They muſt *Change* or *Die*, That *Birth* and *Parentage*, *great Titles* and *Eſtates*, are all the *prey* of *Death*; and no Difference, but that between the *Righteous* and the *Wicked*, the *Sav'd* and *Damn'd*, is known in the other World.

BE as *Courteous* and *Compliſant*, as *Obliging* and *Genteel* in your *Deportment* towards all Men as you can, but take care the *Gentleman* doth not diſgrace the *Miniſter*. Your *Conſciences* are too dear a *Victim*, to be ſacrificed to

to the *Humours* of a *Mortal*, or the *Genius* of an *Age*. Where the *Honour* of your *LORD*, and the *Welfare* of *Immortal Souls*, are concern'd, let not all the *Charms* or *Frowns* of *Men*, yea, the *Blandishments* or *Rage* of *Devils*, move you.

Secondly, I proceed to Discourse of some of the *Principal Branches* of the *Ministerial Office*.

AND (1.) I shall begin with that which is most considerable, the *Preaching of the Word*, call'd in my Text, *Feeding the Flock with Knowledge and Understanding*. Under this Head, I shall briefly consider the *Matter*, *Method*, and *Language of Sermons*.

1. THE *Matter of Sermons*.

AND this must be the *Gospel of CHRIST*, according to your *Commission*, Mark 16. 15. St. *Peter*, in pursuit of this *Order*, preached *JESUS of Nazareth*, Acts 2. 22. And St. *Paul* directed *Timothy*, to *preach the Word, in season, and out of season*, 2 Tim. 4. 2. The *Pulpit* is no Place to vent *private Opinions*, or *darling Notions*, *politick Schemes*, or *philosophical Speculations* in: Your Business there is not to *proselite* Men to a *Party*, but to a *Religion* revealed from *Heaven*: Not to make your Hearers *States-men* and *Philosophers*, but *humble* and *mortified Christians*. You are to preach CHRIST the *Saviour* his *Humiliation* and *Bloodshed*, as a Sacrifice to *Vindictive Justice*, as the Price of *Grace* and *Glory*, to an *Apostate World*. You are to open the *unsearchable Riches* of CHRIST to Convinc'd Sinners, and direct Bleeding Consciences to the *Bowels* of *Mercy*, and the *Wounds* of JESUS for Healing. You are also to preach *Christ Jesus the Lord*, 1 Cor. 4. 5. To *assert* the *Redeemer*'s Right of Sovereignty; To *vindicate* the Authority and Equity of His *Doctrine* and *Laws*; And *press*, by variety

of Motives, Conformity to 'em. You are to explain the *Nature*, and inculcate the *Neceſſity*, of *Faith* and *Repentance*, as Eſtabliſhed Conditions of *Pardon* and *Eternal Life*. You muſt ſecure the Freedom and Efficacy of *Grace*, in the Converſion of Sinners, whileſt you zealouſly oppoſe thoſe *Antinomian Doctrines* which open a Door to all Licentiouſneſs. You muſt not forget to give *Second Table Duties* a proper Place in your Sermons; I am ſure they were not forgot by your LORD in his excellent *Sermon* upon the *Mount*. Whileſt you preach *Meekneſs* and *Patience*, *Juſtice* and *Humanity*, to your People, you do but preach *Conformity* to the *Precepts* and *Life* of JESUS. This muſt be the Subſtance of your *Sermons*, allowing every Doctrine the Precedence due to its Moment. This, I ſay, we muſt preach with Liſe and Seriouſneſs, as Perſons haſtening to meet our Flocks at the *Tribunal* of CHRIST.

Oh! My Brethren, let us *pity Dying Souls*, ſtepping every Moment into *Heaven* or *Hell*, and ſpeak to them as Perſons within view of the *Judgment-Day*. Let us awaken Secure Sinners, whom the melodious *Airs of Grace* won't charm with the harſher Sound of the *LORD*'s *Terrours*, and ring ſuch a Peal of Thunder in their Ears, as may make them feel they have Immortal Souls to be Sav'd, or Damn'd for ever. Let us carry *Celeſtial Fire* in our *Hearts* and *Lips*, to *inſpire* thoſe, who are ſpiritually *dead*, with Life and Motion, and repreſent the *Glory* and *Torment* of the *Unſeen World* to ſuch Advantage, that the moſt Harden'd Wretches may dread to Trifle with GOD and *Eternity* a Moment longer.

2. THE *Method of Sermons*;

AND this ſhould be *Clear* and *Diſtinct*. We muſt *orderly* Diſpoſe, and *decently* Connect, the Parts of our *Sermons*, to give Beauty to the whole Compoſure, and lay it level to the Hearers Underſtanding. A confus'd Rout of Soldiers, as well deſerves the Name of *a Diſciplined*

plined Army, or the Principles of all Things blended together in the first Creation, that of *a Beautiful World*, as a heap of Inconsistent Particulars, and Independent Sentences, the Title of *a Sermon*. Some Mens Discourses are like a Skain of ravell'd *Yarn*, the first End of which is not to be found; their *Doctrines* and *Applications*, *Reasons* and *Directions*, are so confounded, that were they not so kind to impose Arbitrary Names upon them, 'twould be difficult to distinguish them. When there is so much *Disorder* in the Preacher's *Head*, the *Sermon* must in a great measure be lost to the *Auditory*.

3. THE *Language of Sermons.*

AND this should be *Proper* and *Significant*. A Sermon enrich'd with *substantial Argument*, and animated with *vital Language*, hath very much the Advantage of a *loose* and *slovenly Discourse*. Apt *Similitudes* and well-chosen *Metaphors*, are *Vehicles* of *Heavenly Light*; but when *forced*, or *disproportioned* to the Hearers Understanding, they are equally *useless* and *ridiculous*. *Truth* best displays her Charms in a *comely Dress*, neither *ragged* nor *fantastick*. True *Oratory* is *strong Sense*, conveyed to the Mind in easy Expressions, *good Reason* inspired with a *decent Passion*. A rude unpolished Stile, debaseth the Majesty of Preaching; and a luxuriant Flourish of Words, spoils the pure Tast of the *Word*; and therefore both should be avoided. Those *Ministers* who always preach in a Cloud, and wrap up their Discourses in dark mysterious Figures, are like a Candle enclosed in a Dark-Lanthorn, which consumes it self in an unprofitable Blaze; Or rather (to keep to the Metaphor of my *Text*) like unmerciful Shepherds, who lead their thirsty Flocks to a sealed Fountain. We are to treat with Souls about the Great Affairs of *Life* and *Death*; with the Souls of Plow-men and Mechanicks, as well as those of a more genteel Education; and therefore, should study to find out acceptable Words, Words (I mean) which are pro-

per

per to kindle a *Flame* in their *Affections*, and make a lasting *Change* in their *Lives*.

(2.) *PRAYER*. *Miniſters* are not only to *deliver* the *Counſels of GOD* to their People, but to *preſent* their *United Devotions* unto *GOD*. The *Gift of Prayer* is equally neceſſary with that of *Prophecy*: We may as well number the *Heavenly Bodies*, and exactly meaſure out the *Circles* of their *Motions*, as fix upon any *Publick Form* ſuitable to all *Circumſtances* and *Providences*. By the *Gift of Prayer*, I mean an *Ability* to offer up the *Supplications* of the *Church* to *GOD*, in ſuch *Expreſſions* as are proper to *inflame* Divine Paſſions, and *propagate* True Piety among our People.

(3.) *ADMINISTRATION* of the *Seals of the Covenant*, *Baptiſm*, and the *Lord's ſupper*. I fear that a *promiſcuous* Admiſſion of *Infants* to *Baptiſm*, hath hardened many of our *Diſſenting Brethren* in their Oppoſition to it. This *Seal of the Covenant* can belong to none but ſuch whoſe Parents make a *credible* Profeſſion of *Chriſtianity*; and I am ſure that Profeſſion can't be credible which is *notoriouſly contradicted* by a *vicious impenitent Life*.

I would alſo obſerve, That all the *Baptiz'd* are *related* to the *Church*, and fall under the *Care* of *Miniſters*; and therefore 'tis our Duty to lay a *good Foundation* of *Knowledge* in their Souls, by *Catechizing*, and frequently *Calling* upon them to *renew* their *Baptiſmal Vows*, that they may be tranſlated with Solemnity from a State of *incompleat*, to *compleat Membership* with the *Church*.

AS for the *Lord's-ſupper*, 'tis *frequently* and *religiouſly* celebrated among us; and I hope we ſhall never give our BRETHREN of the ESTABLISHMENT *juſt* Reaſon to *Inſult* us upon that Head. However, to perpetuate the Order and Purity of *ſpiritual Adminiſtrations*, I humbly propoſe that every *Paſtour* may have a particular *Flock*, and that none may be allowed to *Travel*

vel up and down the World as *Superintendants* of far diſtant *Aſſemblies*, as if inveſted with an *Apoſtolical Juriſdiction.* Thoſe *Churches* loudly call for your Pity, whoſe *Pulpits* are filled with *Unordained Candidates.* I willingly allow they have *Sacraments* among them, but the *Adminiſtration* muſt be attended with ſome Diſorder. *Miniſters* are to be Judges of their own Acts, becauſe accountable for them; but what *Judgment* they can paſs on the *Fitneſs* or *Unfitneſs* of Perſons they are altogether Strangers to, unleſs it be that of a *blind Charity*, I do not underſtand; and this indeed is ſuch a ſort of Judgment as I never yet ſaw very much Reaſon to admire. 'Tis high time to put an effectual Stop to this Evil, by preſſing *Candidates*, of known Integrity and ſolid Learning, to ſubmit to a ſolemn Inveſtiture, and take the Charge of the ſeveral Congregations to which they are called: By this means you will free your ſelves from the Charge of *countenancing Unordained Uſurpers*, and ſecure the *Church* from the *Inroads* of *Sectaries.*

I have no *Apology* to make for my Freedom under this Head, but an *honeſt Zeal* for the *Honour* and *Intereſt* of our *Common* LORD.

(4.) THE *Exerciſe of Diſcipline.* Under which, I comprehend *private Counſels* and *Reproofs*, as well as *publick Cenſures*: But this hath been ſo fully Diſcourſed by ſome of my more *Learned Brethren*, that I ſhould but abuſe your Patience further to inſiſt on't. And therefore I proceed,

Thirdly, TO Prove the *Doctrine*, *That the* Commiſſion *and* Qualifications *of* Miniſters *are from* GOD.

[1.] THEIR *Commiſſion* is *Divine*; Mat. 28. 19, 20. *Go ye, therefore, and Teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt: Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I*

have

have commanded you: And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the End of the World.

THE *Apoſtles* were *Extraordinary Officers*, appointed to introduce *Chriſtianity* into the World. Their *Miſſion* was immediately from *Chriſt*. Their *Qualifications* were extraordinary; they had *ſeen* and *convers'd* with the *Lord Jeſus*. Their *Miniſtrations* were under the Conduct of an *Infallible Spirit*. They ſpoke all *Languages* by immediate Inſpiration; and *Miracles* were the Signs of their *Miſſion*. Their *Authority* was extraordinary: To *plant Churches*, and *cloath them with Orders*, and *eſtabliſh* their *Doctrines* and *Inſtitutions* as a *ſtanding Rule* of *Faith* and *Worſhip* thro' out the World. None, therefore, may warrantably claim the Title of *Succeſſours* to the *Apoſtles* as ſuch, unleſs they can demonſtrate that their *Miſſion*, *Authority* and *Qualifications* are the ſame with theirs. This *Commiſſion* was not given to the *Apoſtles* as *Apoſtles*, but as *Miniſters* of the *Goſpel*; and conſequently is the Fountain of that Authority which their Succeſſors claim: And this appears evident from the *Work* aſſigned them, to *Teach* and *Baptize*; and the encouraging Promiſe annexed, *Lo, I am wtth you alway, even to the End of the World.* This derives a greater Strength and Light from *Eph.* 4. 11. 12. *And he gave ſome Apoſtles, and ſome Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts, and ſome Paſtours and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt.* The Three Firſt were *Extraordinary Officers*, and therefore of courſe expired when *Chriſtianity* had paſt its Infancy, and gained a firm Eſtabliſhment in the World. The Two Laſt, inſtituted by the ſame Authority, muſt continue 'till the Ends of their Inſtitution are anſwered; 'till there be no more *Ignorant* and *Vicious Souls* to Enlighten and Reform, no more *Afflicted Tempted Saints* to Succour and Refreſh; *i. e.* 'till the Conſummation of all Things.

Jo. 20. 21.

1 *Cor.* 9. 1.

2 *Cor.* 12. 12.

THIS

THIS the *Apostles* were very sensible of, and therefore sate apart some to this *Work* by *solemn Ordination*, and gave them *Power* to *Ordain others*, that there might be a *constant* Succession of *Ministers* for the Service of the *Church*, to the *End of the World.*

[2.] THEIR *Qualifications* are also from GOD; 2 *Cor.* 3. 6. *Who hath also made us able Ministers of the New Testament*—— 1 Tim. 1. 12. *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me Faithful, putting me into the Ministery.* But what need I find Texts to prove a Truth, written as it were with a Sun-Beam?

WHENCE, *Brethren*, is that *Light and Knowledge*, by which you *instruct* the *Ignorant*, *establish* the *Weak*, and *satisfy Troubled Souls?* Proceeds it not from the *Father of Lights*, and *Throne of the Lamb?* Whence is your Pity to perishing Souls derived, but from the *compassionate Bowels* of a *Bleeding Saviour?* Whence had you your *Wisdom* and *Faithfulness* for the Management of the *House of GOD*, but from CHRIST the *Essential Wisdom* of the *Father*, and *Great Bishop* of the *Church?* In a Word; Your *Faith* and *Patience*, *Resolution* and *Zeal*, are the Royal Donatives of your *Ascended LORD.*

I shall conclude this Discourse with an EXHORTATION to *Ministers* and *People.*

First, I Address my self to you, my *Fathers* and *Brethren* in the *Ministry.*

BE Faithful and Diligent in the *Work* to which you are called. Take heed you do not Napkin-up your *Master's Talents*, or Betray the *Trust* repos'd in you, by *Sloth* or *Cowardise.* Feed the *Church of GOD*, committed to your Care; with wholesom Food, that none of your *Flock* may be Starv'd or Poison'd within your

Folds. Diſpenſe the *Ordinances* of the *Goſpel* with a Reverence becoming the *Majeſty* of GOD, whoſe *Deputies* you are; and govern all your *Miniſtrations* by the Sacred Canon. In the Name of the LORD, lift up your *Banner*; enter, I mean, upon your *Work*, in the Fear of GOD, and depend on his Concurrence for all your Succeſs. Adorn your *Miniſtry*, and make your *Character* Venerable by a *Heavenly Converſation*. 'Tis expected you ſhould be a ſort of *walking Bibles*, in which the Virtues of the *Religion* and *Life* of the *Holy Jeſus* are legible. Let, therefore, your *Patience* and *Meekneſs*, your *Sobriety* and *Mortification*, condemn the *Pride*, the *Paſſion*, the *Senſuality*, and *Intemperate Love* of *Riches* and *Honour*, which your *Sermons* cenſure.

ONE Word more to you, my *Brethren*, in *Age* and *Office*, and to the *Sons* of the *Prophets*, who are with you.

STUDY hard, and Ply your *Work*. *Humane* and *Divine Knowledge* are not the *Reward* of *lazy Wiſhes* and *faint Endeavours*, but of a *ſteady Application* and *fervent Prayer*. *Cry after Knowledge*, and *lift up your*
Pro. 2. 3, 4. *Voice for Underſtanding*; *ſearch for her as for*
Dan. 12. 3. *Silver, and dig for her as for hid Treaſure*: Then will you find that *Wiſdom*, by which you may *turn many to Righteouſneſs*, and *ſhine as the Stars for ever and ever*.

I ſhall enforce the *Exhortation* with Two *Motives*.

(1.) CONSIDER the *Dignity* of your Work and Character. You are *Embaſſadors* for GOD, but your *Embaſſy* concerns an Immoveable Kingdom. You are *Stewards* in the *Houſe of GOD*, but your *Care* is reſtrained to Immortal Souls. You are *Paſtours*, but 'tis of a *Flock*, purchas'd by *Blood* of an infinite Value. You are *Miniſters of GOD*, but you are principally ſo for the Good of thoſe who ſhall be *Heirs of Salvation*. This is your *Work*; a *Work* which the brighteſt *Cherubims* don't diſdain;

disdain; The brightest *Cherubims* did I say? Yea, 'tis a *Work* which CHRIST, the *Prince* of *Cherubims*, counts himself Honoured to be your Companion in.

(2.) CONSIDER the *Consequences* of your *Office* with Respect to your *Selves* and *People*.

1. WITH Respect to your *Selves*.

A Faithful Discharge of your LORD's Commission, carrys in it a great Reward, and prepares you for a greater at the Resurrection of the Just. A Familiar Acquaintance with the great Objects of Religion, will ennoble your Minds, and an unwearied Diligence in directing others to Heaven, will give you enlarged Tho'ts of a *New Jerusalem*, and ripen your Preparations for the Glory of the *Promised Land*. The Success of your Ministry will inspire you with Joys too great for any Discouragements to damp; and if Success be denied you, the Consciousness of your Integrity will refresh your Spirits.

BUT this is not all; If you serve GOD with your Spirits in the Gospel of his SON, he will advance you to the brightest Thrones in Heaven: Your Bountiful LORD will reward your Tears, your Prayers, and Pains, with a Crown of Righteousness, as *great* as your Wishes, and as *immortal* as your Souls. Mat. 25. 23. *Well done, good and faithful Servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee Ruler over many things: Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* On the other Hand, consider what Agonies and Convulsions of Conscience will surprize you, if you are found Unfaithful in the Day of CHRIST. Dreadful is the Damnation of those who sink into the Gulf of Perdition, with the Guilt of their *Saviour*'s Blood, and the Blood of Murdered Souls upon them. To be Damned to the Element of Devils, after we have held the flaming Torch to light

others to the *City of GOD*, is *Damnation* graduated to its utmoſt Height.

2. CONSIDER the *Conſequence* of your *Office* with Reſpect to the *People*: And this is no leſs than Everlaſting *Life* or *Death*.

IF you *fulfil* the *Miniſtry*, which you have *receiv'd* of the *LORD*, you are likely to be Inſtrumental to propagate *Religion* in the *World*, and ſave the *Souls* of your *People*. But if you are *Ignorant* or *Scandalous*, you'll harden *Sinners* in their *Enmity* to GOD, and fortify 'em in a *fatal Infidelity* againſt all *Conviction*. To you, Sirs, is committed the *Care* of *precious Souls*, and your *Relation* to CHRIST, and them, commands you to love 'em as your own Bowels: And will ſuch as you let 'em ſtab their *Conſciences*, wound their *Saviour*, and poſt to *Eternal Death* without *warning* 'em? Will ſuch as you, upon whom are the *Vows of GOD*, tempt 'em, by your *unhallow'd Lips* and *Lives*, to a ſtupid Neglect of the *Things* of their *Peace*? Oh curſed *Barbarity!* Let not my *Soul*, Oh! GOD, into the Secrets of theſe Men! Let me never feel that Exemplary Vengeance thou haſt prepared to puniſh them.

Secondly, I ſhall Addreſs my ſelf, in a few Words, to the *Expecting People*.

YOU have heard that our *Commiſſion* and *Qualifications* are from *Heaven*.

(1.) THEREFORE, We demand *Obedience* from you to our *Meſſage*. We challenge not a *Sovereignty* over your *Faith*, nor a blind *Conformity* to our *Dictates*; but a *hearty Subjection* to the *Goſpel* of CHRIST, whoſe *Miniſters* we are: This you can't deny us, and be guiltleſs. Heb. 13. 17. *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and ſubmit your ſelves, for they watch for your Souls, as they*

they that must give Account. Did we preach *Purgatory* and *Indulgences*, Doctrines calculated to cherish *Clergy-Pride* and *Avarice:* Were our *Sermons* big with *Treason* and *Sedition*, stuft with *slaunting Invectives* against the *happy Revolution*, or *glorious Administration* of our Great our Rightful QUEEN: Did we stamp a *Jus Divinum* on *Canons* of our own composure; or inforce *Symbolical Ceremonies*, with *Penalties* of the *highest* Consequence: Did we confine the *Catholick Church* to our own Enclosure; or *Anathematize* all who *differ* from us in *External Modes* of *Devotion:* Did we *Damn* you as *Schismaticks* for *Non-Conformity* to *Impos'd Rites*, which are confessed to be of an *Indifferent Nature:* Then, indeed, you might ask us, By what *Authority* we preached these Things, and who gave us *that Authority.* But seeing we lay no other Burden upon you, than what seems *Good* to the *Holy Ghost*, as well as unto us; and preach no other Doctrines of *Faith*, or Rules of *Life* and *Worship*, than those we have received of the *LORD*; your *Disobedience* to us must be *High Treason* against the *Crown* and *Dignity* of CHRIST our *Master.* Luke 10. 16. *He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.*

(2.) WE intreat your *Candour* and *Prayers.*

THE *Preachers* of an *Invisible World*, groan under the *Corruptions* of *fallen Nature*; for the *Men of GOD* are all the *Off-spring* of Apostate *Adam.* We are tainted with the *Hereditary Leprousy*, and our *Blood* is of the same Colour with the rest of *Mortals.* You must not think to find us *Incarnate Angels*, but Men subject to the same *Passions* and *Infirmities* with your selves. Let it not surprize you to find a great many *Defects* in our *Civil* and *Ministerial Conduct*; we never pretended to a *Sinless Innocency*, or an *Apostolical Infallibility.* We wrestle, like you, with *Flesh* and *Blood*, with a *deceitful World*, and a *tempting Devil*; but *Acts* 14. 15.

but with this Difference, We ſtand upon *advanced Ground*, and are more expos'd to the Enemies Fire. We ſtruggle alſo with the peculiar Difficulties of our own *Work*; Difficulties great enough to ſink us to the Grave were we not refreſhed with the Smiles, and ſupported by the mighty Arm of our LORD.

DID you know what *Diſcouragements* we meet with from *Friends* and *Enemies* in the Diſcharge of our *Office*, what *Pangs* and *Agonies* we feel in our own *Souls*, you would wonder to ſee a *Hoary Head* in a Pulpit.

I beſeech you, in the Language of the Apoſtle, 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 25. *Brethren, pray for us.* Pray, that GOD, with whom is the Reſidue of the *Spirit*, would give us a rich Supply of *Miniſterial Gifts* and *Graces*, that we may be *burning* and *ſhining Lights* in the *Church* and *World*. Pray him to bear us up under the Weight of our Office, and crown our Labours with abundant Succeſs. And we will not ceaſe to pray him,

To make you Fruitful in all the Works of Righteouſneſs under Our Adminiſtrations, that we may Rejoyce together in the Day of CHRIST.

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FINIS.